

A 2.3 – GREECE

Industry Professional Interview Report



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1. INTRODUCTION

The primary research in Greece has been conducted in May 2023. At a first stage, prospect interviewees have been identified, covering several roles and professional profiles in the fashion sector (sales, management, production, design, fashion blogging). The research participants have been interviewed and the interviews have been recorded by their permission, having been informed on all GDPR related issues (Agreement on Recording Consent Form). The interviews followed the structure of the interview questionnaire as provided and agreed upon by the project partnership. We have interviewed 10 participants (7 women, 3 men). 3 out of them are active in the sector for less than 5 years, while the rest 7 are active in the sector for 5-10 years maximum. They are all professionally active in the city of Athens, but several collaborate in the sector at national or even international level.

The interviewees stated overall medium to high digital literacy. There is a high percentage of digital technology use (90%), while most of the respondents have "already heard" about AI in fashion in general. They consider the prospect of integrating AI in their companies as positive, while the use of chatbots – although a familiar tool in general – is not well known to all of them regarding their professional context/sector. Having been informed about the basics of a chatbot and what it could do "in simple words", the respondents were mostly positive regarding the idea of using such technology in their companies/professional settings. All of them agreed that technology assistance such as chatbots could be adapted to the needs of the fashion sector. However, they pointed several challenges, such as costs, low reliability, monitoring needs, de-humanizing processes, data storage and use issues, biases, reducing human skills, job positions loss, lack of human factor/personalization/uniqueness etc. On the other hand, respective benefits would be accurate decision-making, automatization of processes, forecasting, increased revenues.

On the environmental protection side, the respondents seem to employ several practices ranging from recycling practices, use of eco-friendly materials, refurbishing, even some circular economy patterns and specific practices that help in reducing waste. They state that AI tools – including chatbot assistants – could bring environmental benefits in the fashion factor along several areas from design and production phases into sales and retail.



2. METHODOLOGY

"The methodology of this report is based on qualitative research in the form of interviews with fashion industry experts of Greece. During this process, ten respondents have been interviewed in a recorded modality.

A preset form to record the answer of the respondents was used through Google Forms. The structure of the interview contains three sections: "Demographic questions" (7 questions), "Use of Artificial Intelligence within companies" (20 questions) and "Overall opinion of AI impact on the fashion industry" (6 questions). The target group of this interview is represented by fashion and textile industry professionals, from any point of the supply chain, as well as retail. The scope of the interviews are to identify how AI is currently being used by fashion and textile companies in the market of today, the level of technological readiness and their overall opinion on how AI can impact the industry.

The information received during the interviews is subject to further coding and analysis, in order to structure and conclude all the information received. The coding is created based on selected relevant indicators. The questions with a closed character are analyzed based on numerical data processing through the Google Forms software.

The coding indicator list includes the following topics:

- Company activity
- Digital solutions currently used in companies (and how they are being used)
- Reason to use AI in a company
- Benefits/Advantages of AI use
- Concrete results of AI use
- Concerns/challenges about using AI
- Overall opinion on AI use
- Implementation of sustainability practices in the fashion industry process chain.



3. RESULTS

3.1. Company Background

We have interviewed 10 participants (7 women, 3 men). 3 out of them are active in the sector for less than 5 years, while the rest 7 are active in the sector for 5-10 years maximum. They are all professionally active in the city of Athens, but several collaborate in the sector at national or even international level. The interviewees have professional roles that range from the area of sales to management, design, executive positions, fashion bloggers. With respect to daily responsibilities the interviewees stated sales, stock management, design and patron, fabric design, training of new employees, personnel management. Almost all of them are owning/employed in small to medium-size enterprises in the metropolitan area of Athens.

3.2. Use of Artificial Intelligence within fashion companies

3.2.1 Level of digitalization in fashion companies

According to the feedback of the interviewees, the companies they represent or work in are categorized as falling into medium to relatively high digital index (corresponding responses 1-5 scale [4+5] high level 4 responses // medium level [3] 5 responses // low level [2] 1 response.

9 out of 10 interviewees stated that they use digital technologies in their processes. The respondents seem to use several digital technologies and tools. Software or communication tools supporting e-commerce are mentioned in several cases, invoicing and monitoring systems/software at the organizational/administrative level follow, CAD software in design, laser cut technology and corresponding software are also mentioned in the production and design area, while one AI supported tool has been mentioned, "scanning" / "profiling" customers for data mining, comparison, and statistics.

The most interviewees (7 out of 10) have heard about AI being used in fashion. Here are several cases of AI use in the fashion factor as stated by the respondents.

- As a chatbot in an e-shop of a company, as a salesman (in a tablet) which was able to propose you what it would look better on you, creation of your avatar trying clothes, make up etc.
- In a boutique where, as a member of the company, you were scanned by a machine when you entered the store, and your profile was sent directly to the salesperson, with all your details, such as what you have bought, your preferences, your sizes, and so on.
- For example, in one company that you could enter their website and then be toured into their on-sight shops all over the world. You could see clothes, sizes, everything.
- 3D dresses, avatars, chatbots
- Metaverse (digital environment), avatars
- In the production section



- In fashion shows using digital models

Half of the respondents (5) were positive in integrating AI in their companies, 3 were neutral, and 2 would hesitate to do so.

Digital solutions currently used in companies (and how they are being used):

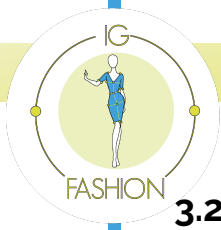
- e shop
- scanner (monitoring sales, returns and available stock)
- Social media
- Specific software (CAD & Rhino)
- Software for the financial and stock monitoring, and AI scanning every client that comes in and out the store, so they use the data compared to the sales.
- Illustrator
- Automatic invoicing systems
- Laser cut machines
- Computer-aided design

3.2.2. Use of AI in fashion companies

7 out of 10 respondents stated that they have heard about occasions where chatbots are being used in the fashion industry. However, none of the respondents reported any form of chatbot use in their company. None of the interviewees had any prior experience in using a chatbot in own company. None of the interviewees stated the use of any form of AI based tools in their companies. Most of the interviewees stated however that they would probably consider using AI tools in their companies. All respondents agree that AI technology can be adapted to meet the needs of fashion companies.

Here are several cases of possible AI use in the fashion factor as stated by the respondents:

- As a chatbot in an e-shop of a company, as a salesman (in a tablet) which was able to propose you what it would look better on you, creation of your avatar trying clothes, make up etc.
- In a boutique where, as a member of the company, you were scanned by a machine when you entered the store, and your profile was sent directly to the salesperson, with all your details, such as what you have bought, your preferences, your sizes, and so on.
- I have seen, for example, in one company that you could enter their website and then be toured into their on-site shops all over the world. You could see clothes, sizes, everything.
- 3D dresses, avatars, chatbots
- Metaverse (digital environment), avatars
- In the production section
- In fashion shows using digital models



3.2.3. Challenges, benefits & concrete results of using AI in fashion companies

No use of chatbots has been reported. The respondents report the following possible recurring challenges in using AI in fashion companies:

- Decreased creativity
- Decreased role of the human factor
- Maintenance costs and knowledge/skills capital needed
- Possible lack of accuracy/reliability in such tools

The respondents reported the following recurring benefits in using AI in fashion companies:

- Increased revenue
- Enhanced decision making
- Forecasting potential
- Increased performance in effective execution of complex tasks

The respondents have not associated concrete challenges to the aforementioned benefits, except the potential lack of “personal-human” touch in related processes.

3.3. Overall opinion of AI impact on the fashion industry

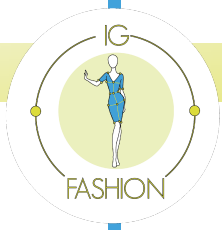
All respondents agree that AI will change the way fashion is created and sold. However, they express certain concerns about this, such as decrease in team productivity, cost-related issues, understanding and interpreting results as generated from AI based tools, the occurrence of biased results, the need of acquisition of specific digital skills, the gradual loss of diversity and uniqueness vs uniformity, reduction of physical stores and thus human contact, especially so as fashion has a cultural and social nature.

All respondents agree that chatbots can be further employed in the design process and can be a useful tool in the fashion industry in general. With respect to benefits, respondent repeated their feedback regarding the benefits of AI in the industry, highlighting however the benefits mostly in sales, which makes sense since chatbots are becoming more and more of a standard tool not only in e-commerce and e-shops, but also as assistants in large companies in services (mobile telephony, energy, etc.).

Regarding the potential environmental benefits using chatbots, respondents tend to agree that there could be environmental benefits, depending however on the usage of chatbots in the industry.

The opinions about the overall use of AI in the fashion industry are:

- All respondents stated that they believe that AI will change the way fashion is created and sold in the future.
- Considering chatbot assistants in particular, all respondents would agree to a certain extent that they would be a useful tool for the fashion industry. They mentioned mostly the sales sector to be particularly benefiting by using chatbots (customer service, e-commerce, customer experience etc.).



- Lastly, respondents agreed that assistance tools like AI chatbots could be applied in the design process and phase in the fashion sector, and not only in the retail processes and customer service.

3.4. Implementation of sustainability practices

There are several practices reported by the respondents regarding the protection of environment including for example use of ecological raw materials, reduction of ingredients harmful to the environment, better stock management to reduce logistics, which in turn contributes to the carbon footprint, packaging recycling, waste management, refurbishing, using bio-products for the creation of patterns, eco approaches such as repairing, remaking so that the clothes can be used again, usage of toxic free and recycled context, reduction of energy and water consumption, fashion items made from grapes and waste etc., use of laser cutting machines, increase of the creation of handmade good quality leather shoes instead of plastic ones, aiming for the minimum waste of all toxic materials.

In terms of technologies applied to meet sustainability standards, most respondents didn't provide any specific information and data. However, the following have been reported:

- Water and energy consumption tracking, AI-assisted design, and 3D (CAD - software), data analytics used for production and collection management.
- Extended use on digital tools and means instead of hard copies, paper etc.

The respondents stated that in one way or another they believe that they use circular economy standards and principles to some extent in their companies. Here are some examples of practices used to increase the sustainability in the companies for which the interviewees work:

- Recycling all packaging materials.
- Use of ecological raw materials, reduction of ingredients harmful to the environment and of course better stock management to reduce logistics, which in turn contribute to the carbon footprint.
- Recycling of the waste and conservation of surplus raw materials and reuse. There is no undue waste.
- Refurbished items, utilizing energy-efficient office spaces, recycling and low paper consumption.
- Manufacturing own patterns without using algae, the raw material is never thrown away and we design a vegan collection to balance the use of leather.
- Use of biodegradable materials for packaging and ecological fabrics.
- Repair, remake and refresh so that the clothes can be used again, usage of toxic free and recycled context, recycling, reduction of energy and water consumption, fashion made from grapes and waste etc.
- Stopped using cutting knives for the molds and only using laser cutting machines, increasing the creation of handmade good quality leather shoes instead of plastic ones, always having the minimum waste of all toxic materials, recycling up to where it is possible.
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5. CONCLUSIONS

Overall findings

We have interviewed 10 participants (7 women, 3 men). 3 out of them are active in the sector for less than 5 years, while the rest 7 are active in the sector for 5-10 years maximum. They are all professionally active in the city of Athens, but several collaborate in the sector at national or even international level. The interviewees have professional roles that range from the area of sales to management, design, executive positions, fashion bloggers. With respect to daily responsibilities the interviewees stated sales, stock management, design and patron, fabric design, training of new employees, personnel management. Almost all of them are owning/employed in small to medium-size enterprises in the metropolitan area of Athens.

The interviewees stated overall medium to high digital literacy. There is a high percentage of digital technology use (90%), while most of the respondents have “already heard” about AI in fashion in general. They consider the prospect of integrating AI in their companies as positive, while the use of chatbots – although a familiar tool in general – is not well known to all of them regarding their professional context/sector. Having been informed about the basics of a chatbot and what it could do “in simple words”, the respondents were mostly positive regarding the idea of using such technology in their companies/professional settings. All of them agreed that technology assistance such as chatbots could be adapted to the needs of the fashion sector. However, they pointed several challenges, such as costs, low reliability, monitoring needs, de-humanizing processes, data storage and use issues, biases, reducing human skills, job positions loss, lack of human factor/personalization/uniqueness etc. On the other hand, respective benefits would be accurate decision-making, automatization of processes, forecasting, increased revenues.

On the environmental protection side, the respondents seem to employ several practices ranging from recycling practices, use of eco-friendly materials, refurbishing, even some circular economy patterns and specific practices that help in reducing waste. They state that AI tools – including chatbot assistants – could bring environmental benefits in the fashion factor along several areas from design and production phases into sales and retail.



Key aspects of interest for the needs of the IG-Fashion Compendium

The group of professionals in the fashion sector in Greece having participated in this small-scale research activity is by no means representing the sector in the country. However, since the sector has a quite closed-circuit-network of professionals, their opinion has some statistical weight, pointing to interesting trends regarding the objectives of the IG-Fashion project for a more intelligent and greener fashion sector. Almost all the respondents seem to be digitally literate and familiar with several digital tools that they use in their everyday company tasks. However, these tools are of a rather functional and procedural nature (sales, stock monitoring etc.) complemented however with software (design etc.) that is used in the production phases. AI is a known concept among them. They can identify several benefits in the application of AI tools in their businesses, including chatbots as AI based assistants, although they don't actually use any.

However, it should be taken into consideration that AI seems to be both a "blessing and a curse" here, since the respondents expressed specific worries connected to possible threats to the human factor in the fashion sector, the "death" of imagination and creativity, uniqueness, the "human touch". There are specific benefits, and the respondents acknowledge them; for example, automatization where it is needed, assistance in decision making, dealing with complex tasks etc. But the de-humanizing threat seems to loom large over them. In conclusion, and with respect to the IG-Fashion approach in developing and introducing methodologies and tools for the fashion sector professionals and VET trainers correspondingly, it should be taken into consideration that AI should be methodologically (if not philosophically) approached/introduced rather as "IA" (Intelligent Assistance) than AI (Artificial Intelligence). The complementary and assistive nature of chatbots and other AI based or inspired tools should be highlighted, taking well-documented distance from the hype which is going on about AI in the media.



ANNEX - CODING TABLE

Indicator Number	Indicator	Indicator color	Associated text
1.	Company activity	Yellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department Store - Sales • Salesman in a clothing company • Designing and production of fashion items • Clothing company for special occasions (e.g., cocktail party) and clothes for specific professions e.g., lawyers, doctors etc.) • Department store (clothes, shoes, bags, jewelry etc.) • Design and production of leather goods and vegan collections • Fashion blogger & merchandiser • Design, production, wholesale for beachwear • Global clothing and footwear company • Freelancer in big factories in sector
2.	Digital solutions currently used in companies (and how they are being used)	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e shop, scanner (monitoring sales, returns and available stock) • Scanner, social media, e-shop, programs for monitoring stock • Specific software (CAD & Rhino) • e shop, scanner, software for the financial and stock monitoring, and AI scanning every client that comes in and out the store, so we use the data compared to the sales. • Social media, e shop, auto cad, illustrator etc.



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social media, e shop, software ● Automatic invoicing systems, laser cut machines. ● Scanner, e shop, software for financial and stock monitoring ● Computer-aided design, use of 3D design software (CAD), automatic cutting (laser cut)
3.	Reason to use AI in a company	Blue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Here are several cases of AI use in the fashion factor as stated by the respondents. Regarding the reason to use AI in a company, please check also indicators 4 and 7. ● As a chatbot in an e-shop of a company, as a salesman (in a tablet) which was able to propose you what it would look better on you, creation of your avatar trying clothes, make up etc. ● In a boutique where, as a member of the company, you were scanned by a machine when you entered the store, and your profile was sent directly to the salesperson, with all your details, such as what you have bought, your preferences, your sizes, and so on. ● I have seen, for example, in one company that you could enter their website and then be toured into their on-sight shops all over the world. You could see clothes, sizes, everything. ● 3D dresses, avatars , chatbots



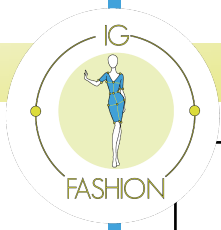
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Metaverse (digital environment), avatars ● In the production section ● In fashion shows using digital models
4.	Benefits/Advantages of AI use	Red	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased performance, Execution of highly complex tasks, Uninterrupted operation, Increased production efficiency, Automation of processes. ● Improved sustainability, shorter lead-times. ● Increased performance, Increased revenue from better sales, Increased production efficiency. ● Intelligent forecasting ● Easier decision-making process. ● Increased revenue from better sales. ● It gives you power/knowledge with a minimum effort, speed. ● Increased client satisfaction, immediacy of service. ● Decreasing the need for human resources.
5.	Concrete results of AI use	Grey	N/A
6.	Concerns/challenges about using AI	Pink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Decreased team productivity. ● Decreased creativity, jobs will be reduced, personalisation will be lost, lack of imagination, and interpersonal relationships in sales will be lost.



			<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Decreased human resources.● A machine could never compare to a human being.● High costs in development of the tool to reach its intended purpose.● Wrong answers and inability to solve customer problems - need to communicate often with a representative.● Taking initiatives, quantity instead of quality.● Data storage, Understanding and interpreting results, a lot of information needs to be entered.● Biased results, Competences of employees that must work with this technology.● The companies will continue to compete through AI● It could be extremely useful, but diversity and uniqueness will be lost. It will all be the same designs. It's not like humans, for example, where a mistake can give rise to an idea. Imagination will be lost.● There will be a reduction in physical stores, a reduction in human resources, a reduction to elimination of human contact, which can lead to isolation of people.● Shops will be eliminated, human resources reduced, everything will be done very quickly and electronically without critical thinking (fast fashion).
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The human element will be lost because there will be a significant reduction in staff, everything will be standardised and the artistic part, the imagination, will definitely be lost also. ● Individualisation will be lost, there will be no personal style, everything will be standardised, there will be no interaction between people when it comes to shopping, because fashion has always been linked to social norms. ● It will not be a matter of fashion in the future but a matter of time (gaining time - fast fashion)
7.	Overall opinion on AI use	Purple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All respondents stated that they believe that AI will change the way fashion is created and sold in the future. ● Considering chatbot assistants in particular, all respondents would agree to a certain extent that they would be a useful tool for the fashion industry. They mentioned mostly the sales sector to be particularly benefiting by using chatbots (customer service, e-commerce, customer experience etc.). ● Lastly, respondents agreed that assistance tools like AI chatbots could be applied in the design process and phase in the fashion sector, and not only in the retail processes and customer service.
8.	Implementation of sustainability practices in the fashion industry process chain.	Orange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recycling all packaging materials. ● Use of ecological raw materials, reduction of ingredients harmful to the



			<p>environment and of course better stock management to reduce logistics, which in turn contribute to the carbon footprint.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Recycling of the waste and conservation of surplus raw materials and reuse. There is no undue waste.● Refurbished items, utilizing energy-efficient office spaces, recycling and low paper consumption.● Manufacturing own patterns without using algae, the raw material is never thrown away and we design a vegan collection to balance the use of leather.● Use of biodegradable materials for packaging and ecological fabrics.● Repair, remake and refresh so that the clothes can be used again, usage of toxic free and recycled context, recycling, reduction of energy and water consumption, fashion made from grapes and waste etc.● Stopped using cutting knives for the molds and only using laser cutting machines, increasing the creation of handmade good quality leather shoes instead of plastic ones, always having the minimum waste of all toxic materials, recycling up to where it is possible.
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